A LETTER TO Mr. CONGREVE ON HIS Pretended Amendments, &c. OF Mr. COLLIER'S Short View of the *Immorality* and *Prophaneneſs* OF THE *ENGLISH STAGE.*

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A LETTER TO Mr. *Congreve*, On his pretended Amendments, *&c.*

SIR,

TO be thought *Lazy*, I muſt confeſs, is not much for ones credit; and you have ſhewn, that to take pains to be *Idle*, is as little worth ones while: So that if you had no other reaſon to write againſt Mr. *Collier*, than to avoid the Scandal of *Lazyneſs*; you muſt not be angry if I call it a very *Idle* Anſwer. P. 2.

You ſay, *you would not undertake to defend the Corruptions of the Stage*; not while you write Comedies for it, I judge: but if it will not, by your own confeſſion, bear a *defence*; I am ſure, you ſhould *undertake* to reform it: your place, and intereſt in it, do more eſpecially oblige you to it: and if Mr. *Collier* had laid the wickedneſs of a great many more Plays, beſides your own, at your door, he had not much abus'd you; becauſe they muſt have your approbation, before they come upon that Stage, to which you are related: which perhaps might put that Gentleman upon dealing a little more ſevere with you than ordinary.

I am ſorry I cannot think you altogether ſo innocent, and ſo good a Chriſtian, as you ſhould be; but yet you need not fall abſolutely into deſpair; you are not, you ſee, denied *the benefit of the Clergy*: Mr. *Collier*, whoſe hard fate it is, to be moſt at leiſure for your *Ordinary*; has beſtowed a great deal of good pains upon you: but really you have ſo very foully, and ungraciouſly requited him; that, I am afraid, he will

P. 3.

ſcarce

ſcarce think it worth his while, to be at any more trouble about you; if you are ſo hardened, and recoyling, he muſt e'en give you over.

I had thoughts, to put all your dirty, and *Billings-gate* language, againſt him, into one Paragraph; and had heapt it up together, as well as I could, for ſuch an unreaſonable quantity, in ſo little a compaſs; but, when I had done, I found, I had in effect, copied your whole Book; there were only a few impertinent, and ſenſeleſs lines left, ſcarce worth obſervation; and then, it made ſuch a loathſome *Dunghil*, as you call it, that I was forced to hold my Noſe; and away with it.

You fall Egregiouſly foul, both upon his Intellectuals, and his Morals; you have endeavoured to detect Mr. *Collier*, to be a man of great *abſurdity*, and *ignorance*. Now, he that makes ſo very bold with another, ought, in prudence and good manners, to be ſome conſiderable degrees above him, both in Virtue and in Senſe: but when I compare the ſeveral *Eſſay*'s that Gentleman has given, of his Judgment, and penetration, P. 2.

with your *four poor Plays*, I cannot think the right lay on your ſide, to render him ſo contemptible for his Ignorance.

You repreſent him, from cover to cover, for a moſt notoriouſly lewd, and
p. 4. immoral man, a perſon *in the high Vigour of obſcenity*; and you have a pretty way with you to keep up his Character, when you beſtow ſo many damnable, lewd allegories on him, in your Anſwer: He *commits a rape upon your words*, and that you heighten ſtill, to be no leſs than *deflowring of Virgins*: There is, indeed, ſuch a deal of *Virginity* belonging to the Stage, every way, that any one who breaks in upon you, is in danger of being laid hold on for a *Raviſher*.

I muſt ſtep forward a little, to mind you here; that you ſay, *Metaphors do*
p. 85. *chiefly diſtinguiſh, the manner of a mans Breeding, and Converſation*; and, *that ſuch Ideas, have their beginning, from a familiarity with ſuch objects*: Why, what a Beaſt will you make of your ſelf, at this rate of arguing? *committing a rape upon words*; *Raviſhing the Virgins*; *looking on naked obſcenity*, and then *Flogging* out; (I thank God, I am Ignorant what

what Idea you have to match with that word:) The next that follows, of a *ſinful Pædagogue*, is almoſt Sodomitical; and then after all this, *licking himſelf whole with an abſolution.* Examin your ſelf a little; by ſuch original Images of yours, as theſe, and then conſider, whether you have right on your ſide, to fall ſo very foul on Mr. *Collier*'s Morals; unleſs it happens to be with you, as Sir *Roger L'Eſtrange* obſerves it was with one of the *lewdeſt Strumpets*, to be always crying out, *Lord, to ſee the Impudence of ſome Women!*

But Mr. *Collier* was not an Idiot, when he ſet his name to his Book: If he had been conſcious to himſelf, of any conſiderable immorality, when he did it; he muſt have been abandoned: He knew what Adverſaries he was going to create; but *innocency is bold as a Lyon:* And I do not find, either that Mr. *Dennis*, who ſate at the head of a Club, above a Month to impeach him, or Mr. *Congreve*, who has ſtaid longer upon the Inquiſition, have laid any one conſiderable inſtance of Immorality to his charge, except it be the writing of a very ingenious book againſt it.

You

P. 4. You repreſent him for an *evil Spirit* entring into your Plays: Now *evil Spirits* have ſhewn a very great alacrity and inclination, at entring into any thing that is *Swiniſh*: Therefore, I cannot blame you for taking alarm at the word *Legion*, in relation to your own little Herd: But really, you had no reaſon to apprehend Mr. *Collier* for that Treſpaſs; for his only fault is, he did not go into them ſo far as he ſhould have done, to do you Juſtice: He has happen'd to fall fouleſt upon your *Mourning Bride*; which, being leaſt liable to Exception, he could endure to read over; but he has been very ſpairing of the *three biggeſt* for Obſcenity, and Prophaneneſs; which is the greateſt advantage he has given you againſt him.

P. 6. You ſay again, you *will take the liberty to whip the evil Spirit out of your Plays, wherever you can meet him:* I am glad of that withal my Heart. But be adviſed; whip the Devil gently; you don't know, but it may come to his

Ib. turn, to favour you another time: If Mr. *Collier* has returned any of your *current* Caſh *into the Devil's Exchequer* for you, it will be ready for you, againſt

you

you have occaſion for an Intereſt there.

You ſeem to be in pain, and remorſe, with your ſelf, that you have not duly *return'd his Civilities, in calling him Names*: But be out of pain; you have done pretty well, for a Gentleman: And, I believe, I have a Collection of yours, out of this ſhort Eſſay, that will be a Match for Mr. *Collier*'s *Nomenclature*, at any time: Beſide, when it ſeem'd to run low with you, his own Perſonal Names, *Jeremy* and *Collier*, proved great helps to you.

I am now come to your *Poſtulata*.

The firſt I grant you, becauſe 'tis *Ariſtotles*, and a Juſt one. The ſecond I muſt refuſe you, that is your own, and Unreaſonable: You ought not to repreſent any Immoralities upon the Stage, either in Word, or Deed, that will give Offence to chaſte and ſober Ears, no, tho you pretend to puniſh them aftewards: You might as well argue, it would be of uſe to have idle Fellows Swear and Curſe in the Streets, purely for the ſake of giving ſober Men, an opportunity to Chide them: We are offended much at ſuch things from the Perſons

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themſelves; and much more, when we have them repreſented to us, with advantages at ſecond hand. You ſay, *it were very hard, a Painter ſhould be thought to reſemble all the the ugly Faces he draws*; [remember here again your Doctrine of *Ideas*.] But what if a *Painter* chooſes to draw Obſcene, and Baudy Pieces, and expoſes them to the Publick, for their Diverſion; is it hard that ſuch a one ſhould be Cenſured? Or, can we think, his Thoughts were altogether ſo chaſtly taken up, and employ'd, when they were directing the Pencil?

Ib'd. Your Third I grant you, tho your own; nor do I expect Thanks for the favour, becauſe I think 'tis very indifferent, whether your *Paſſages* are read in *Collier* or your ſelf: There are but too words odds that I can find,

P. 27. and they are *waſting*, for *wafting*; and

P. 47. the little word, *ſtill*, omitted: Only,

P. 4. if we muſt needs look back *into the Field of Nature, from whence they were tranſplanted*; we ſhall have a larger *Field* of Debauchery to walk in, and a great deal of worſe Stuff, than Mr. *Collier* has Collected ſtill in view.

If

If you demand the priviledge of the *Habeas Corpus Act*, to remove your offenſive Plays, from the *Quarter-Seſſions of Middleſex*, to the *King's-Bench Bar*; and appeal from the *Preſentment of the Grand Jury*, to a *juſt Judge*; I believe the thing may be practicable enough, but I queſton whether it would do you any Service.

I muſt differ with you a little again, about your fourth *Poſtulatum*. [You ſhould be adviſed, Mr. *Congreve*, when you choſe this odd way of vindicating Poems Mathematically; to ſee that your Principles be ſelf-evident: But you ſhew your ſelf ſo needy, and ask ſuch unreaſonable things, and with that Confidence, that you will be taken notice of, by all the *Philomaths in and about* London, for a ſturdy Beggar in their way.] *When words*, you ſay, *are applied to Sacred things, and with a purpoſe to treat of Sacred things, they ought to be underſtood accordingly*: Right! and ſo they ought. *But when they are otherwiſe applied, the diverſity of the Subject, gives them a diverſity of ſignification*: Right again! That is to ſay, in the former caſe, they are *ſacredly*

uſed; but when the ſame peculiar words are taken, and uſed in this latter caſe, which is yours, they are uſed *Prophanely*; and is the Sin that is commonly expreſs'd by that Phraſe, *ludere cum Sacris:* And now, what ſervice can you expect from a Propoſition, that is already Revolted from you? I muſt tell you, there is a great deal of difference, between uſing the ſame common *Alphabet*, with that in Scripture; and the borrowing of ſome peculiar Words, or Phraſes, from it, that are *ſpelt out of that Alphabet*. For Example, our Saviour has this peculiar Expreſſion of himſelf, **I am the Truth**; which is ſo emphatical, and remarkable, in relation to his Perſon, that the whole tenor of the Goſpel depends upon it: When this Expreſſion therefore is put familiarly into the Mouth of a Mad-man upon the Stage, and made as it were, the diſtinguiſhing Catch, and Bob of his Frenzy; this I think, is ſomething more, than ſpelling out of the *Alphabet*. I do aſſure you, it had that ill effect, that I never met with any one, who came from that Play, but confeſt, it gave them Offence;

and

and minded them from whom the expreſſion was taken. Wou'd you had been contented with your firſt thought, I am *Tom tell troth*! for that had been harmleſs, and fooliſh enough, and fit for a Mad-man. p. 56.

Having ended your *Poſtulata*, and made ſuch an Apology, as was neceſſary, for the *latitude* they be ſpeak: you proceed to ſubjoin a ſort of *Hypotheſis*, of the *moral inſtruction of Plays*, to this purpoſe: That when the *Play is over*, we have all the moral of it, ſumm'd up in a few lines to the Audience, *in Rhyme, to be more engaging upon the memory:* for example, *In Love for Love*; the moral of it is ſumm'd up very briefly in that Diſtick, at the cloſe.

The miſtery this day is, that we find,
A Lover true; not that a Womans kind.

here, you have the whole Moral of a long Play, wrapt up at laſt, in a *miſtery*, for the better inſtruction of the Audience.

I

I ſee no great occaſion of moderating diſtinctly, between you both, in relation to all the particular matters in diſpute, from your Plays: Your *Tragedy* is a very good one, and Anſwers Sir *Rich. Blackmores* Character of it, who recommends it, for an admirable one; but ſtill with this reſerve, *ſome few things only excepted:* for inſtance; when you make King *Manuel*, in the fury of his reſentment, ſay, of *Oſmyns pleading audacious Love* to his Miſtreſs;

Preface to King Ar.

Mourn. Bride p. 26.

Better for him, to tempt the rage of Heaven,
And wrench the bolt red-hiſſing, from the hand
Of him that thunders,——
'Tis daring for a God.——

Thats a bold ſtroke indeed! I proteſt, if I had been the Author of it, I ſhould have trembled at the *Gigantick* inſolence of my fancy: afterward, the attempt is likened to *Ixions Embracing Divinity:* Bleſs me! you Poets do frequently make ſo bold with God Almighty, and his Divinity; that if he had

had not declared himſelf, from his own mouth, to be a God of Patience and long ſuffering; I ſhould wonder how he does bear it of you.

Then again, you make this bluſtering King pay his, and your reſpects, to the Character, and Office of a Clergyman, very handſomely.

I'll have a Prieſt ſhall preach her from her faith,
And make it ſin, not to renounce that vow,
Which I'd have broken.

Mourning Bride, p. 10.

But when you make ſo very bold with God's honour, his Prieſts may contentedly take any thing, in the ſame Play: *The Diſciple is not above his Maſter, nor the Servant above his Lord, &c.* vid. Matt. 10. 24, 25, 26.

I would fain beſtow one note more upon the *Mourning Bride*, tho' I am ſure to incur the Cenſure of ill nature, and the *Splene* for it: This I know is your Darling Off-ſpring, and therefore I would be very tender of it; you have been at the expence of more Education than ordinary upon it, and

therefore

therefore you ſay, p. 23, *If Smut, and Prophaneneſs, can be prov'd againſt this, you muſt give up the Cauſe.* I am not now upon charging it with *Smut*; but when I have dropt this one remark more to the two former, I will leave it to your ſelf to judge, whether it is not now and then a little *Prophane*: Methinks you ſeem ſomewhat Conſcious of it already, when immediately after, in that ſame Paragraph, you ſilently let fall the word *Prophaneneſs*; and cry out, *if there be immodeſty in that Tragedy, I muſt confeſs my ſelf incapable of ever writing any thing with modeſty, or decency.*

But to convince you farther (if you are not yet convinc't) that there is *Prophaneneſs* in that Play, let me prevail with you to weigh that violent rapture of *Oſmyn* to his *Bride* over again. *Mourn. Bride*, p. 35.

> *My all of bliſs, my everlaſting Life,*
> *Soul of my Soul, and end of all my wiſhes.*

Oſmyn, or *Alphonſo*, is your *Hero*; and deſign'd for the Character of a very

very good, and brave Perſon; and therefore, when it comes to his turn to ſpeak, we expect a great deal of the *Poets* mind, and Principles from him; for the Honourable * Mr. *Granville*, makes it *a pretty true obſervation of Poets, that in the frame of their Heroes, they commonly draw their own Pictures:* But now, when *your All of bliſs, Your everlaſting life, Your very Soul*, and *the end of all your wiſhes*, are all wrapt up together, and conſummated in the enjoyment of one Woman; What is become of your *Heaven?* Or what farther buſineſs, or intereſt can you have depending in that *eternal* ſtate, where *they neither Marry, nor are given in Marriage?* I am clearly for your encouraging Men to Love their Wives; but there is no neceſſity of repreſenting a Good Husband ſo very *uxorious*, as to make him declare himſelf poſſeſt of *Heaven*, and the *eternal rewards of Religion*, when he has his *Spouſe* in his Arms.—— But ſome grains of allowance muſt be made here, ſince

* Preface to Heroick Love.

This was an Off'ring to the ſex deſign'd. Epil.

After all, allowing your Adverſary has been a little too angry with that Celebrated Tragedy of yours; Would you have your Comedies paſs without exception too? What think you of your *Prologue* to the *Double Dealer?* where you would inſinuate, by the alluſion of a *Mooriſh Cuſtom*, that there's hardly a Husband in all the City of *London*, but what's a *Cuckold:* and, the better to grace them in that Character, you are pleas'd to give them the venerable Epethite of, *Chriſtian Cuckolds.*

I'th Good Man's Arms, the Chopping baſtard thrives,
For he thinks all his own, that is his Wives.

I am ſure it ought to be ſo, and to inſinuate the contrary, is to ſtir up Jealouſie; which is evidently the deſign of the whole Play that follows. On this occaſion, be ſo kind to lend me the two firſt Verſes of your *Prologue* to the old *Batchelour.*

How this vile World is chang'd! in former days, Pro-

Prologues, were ſerious Speeches, before Plays;
Grave ſolemn things,——

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There is your own Confeſſion, to one great part of Mr. *Collier*'s Book, how infinitely the *Antients* exceeded our *Modern* pretenders to Poetry, in the *Gravity*, and *Morality* of their performances.

In ſhort, if *Belinda*, and *Letitia*, in the old *Batch*. If *the three biggeſt*, of the four Women in the *Double Dealer*, have their Characters, and Cues, contrived for the advancement of Modeſty, and Virtue; If, in *Love for Love*, *Tattle's* inſtructing of *Miſs Prue*, and her ſaying her *Catechiſm* after him, wherein ſhe is taught a little of Mr. *Congreve's Court breeding*; To give up her Virtue, *and to lye, to be angry, and yet more complying; to fall back, when ſhe ſhould run away; and to hold her tongue, when ſhe ſhould cry out*; And, if Mrs. *Foreſights* leaving them together, to do their worſt, in that juncture, were intended *out of good morality*; then ſome well meaning People have been very much miſtaken, that's all.

You frequently take occaſion to Triumph, and Lord it over Mr. *Collier*, in point of *Criticiſm*; 'tis your Province, I confeſs, more than his; and therefore, if you are the greater Maſter in that Art, it is no ſuch wonder; but I think Impartially, you come ſhort of him in your own Buſineſs, and that is a thing to be wondred at indeed. At leaſt, you are pleas'd to ſhew your ſelf a *ſowre Critick*, when you have no ground: You quarrel at Mr. *Collier*'s Phraſe of *learning a Spaniel to Set*; which ſhews, that you are yet to *learn* the compaſs of our Engliſh Tongue, or that you are reſolved to be a Wrangling, right or wrong. Say you, *I ſuppoſe, he means*, teaching *a Spaniel to Set*. But why ſo? What neceſſity is there for changing the Word, only to put as good a one in the place? For, is Mr. *Congreve* yet to be told, that *to learn*, is often uſed Actively, for *to teach*? Does he not remember it to be ſo uſed in the *Pſalter*? *O* learn *me true Underſtanding*! I chuſe to refer you to that Ejaculation, becauſe it may be a proper one for you, to uſe in your Devotions.

In

In *p.* 32, you alarm'd me of ſomething very dreadful in that Expreſſion of Mr. *Collier*'s, *Nature made the ferment and riſing of the Blood, for ſuch occaſions:* But, having turn'd to his Book for it, I am now at a loſs, which to queſtion moſt, your *Underſtanding* or *Sincerity*, in that Charge: I hope, ſay you, *he ſpeaks Figuratively*; as 'tis plain he does, for it is a ſort of *Metonimy:* And yet in the next Paragraph, you take him *Literally*, and endeavour to make mad work with it; but it will not ſerve your turn that way: And if it be *Figuratively*, ſaid, I perceive you have nothing to ſay to it. Take it and turn it how you pleaſe; I am ſure you cannot make it look *Prophanely:* For, allowing *Nature* there to ſignify our *Maker*, which is the utmoſt you would have; then to ſay, Nature *made the ferment of our Blood, for ſuch Occaſions*; is, in Mr. *Collier*'s Senſe, to ſay, That *God made the riſing of our Paſſions on purpoſe*, to ſhew our reſentment againſt bad Plays, and ſuch like ſinful Provocations: Which I think, is very wiſely and juſtly ſaid: And your quarrelling ſo lamentably with it, ſerves only to ſhew what you would

would be at, and no more: Unleſs you will give me leave to obſerve from thence, how wretchedly you are out of the way, and loſt, when you put your ſelf upon talking *Savoury* and *Religiouſly*. You muſt not be angry, if I take this occaſion, of turning the *but*-end of a quaint expreſſion of your own,

P. 26. againſt you; *The Corruption of a Rotten-Poet, is the Generation of a very ſowre, and aukward Divine.* Writers you ſee, will be free with one another, and borrow, and pay upon occaſion.

Over leaf we have you in another fit of *Divinity* again; I am glad to find it; 'tis a good ſign: And tho' you are ſtill very aukward at it, there's hopes you may improve; 'tis but young dayes with you in that profeſſion: You ſhould let alone St. *Chryſoſtom* yet; 'tis a vanity with all young Divines, to be nibling and retailing the Fathers, before they are well grounded in the Bible. St. *Chryſoſtom's* rule, as you have apply'd it, will ſignify nothing: For did not God

Iſa. 58. 1. command the Prophet *Iſaiah*, to *Cry aloud, and ſpare not*, and *to lift up his voice like a Trumpet.* And yet for all that *Tumult*, you muſt own, if you

ſet

ſet up for a Divine, that he was *inſpir'd with the Holy Ghoſt*: *So*, you ſee, *now the reaſon is* not ſo *plain* again.

I would now march forward with you, and Juſtify the Charges of Prophaneneſs, and Smut, that are exhibited againſt you; and, to do you any good, would produce a great many more, which your Adverſary has omitted: But the miſchief of it lyes here; If Mr. *Collier* paſt any of it over, out of Modeſty, with a Daſh, as being too Baudy to be expreſs'd; then you cry, *it lyes yet upon him to prove it*; *his bare Aſſertion without an Inſtance, is not ſufficient*: And if he diſobliges his Paper with a little of it expreſly, to prove *downright ſmut* upon you, then all your Thanks is, *why e'en let him take it for his pains*: And with either one, or the other *horn* of this *Dilemma*, I find you moſt commonly upon your defence: The force, and weight of your whole Vindication, ſeems very much to depend upon this Argument: And, to ſay truth, it is, as you have pitch'd, and fortified it, an impregnable one: But who, do you think, will be at the pains to help you cleanſe your Plays of their

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their *Smut*, and *Filthineſs*, when you will only allow him to carry off the *Dung* for his labour? Indeed, when you ſay, *you are willing to part with it*, you come up to our terms; but you ſoon relapſe again; there is no holding you to your Bargain.

When Mr. *Collier* charges you with prophaning the word *Inſpiration*, your
P. 45. Anſwer is, *The poor Man is troubled with the Flatus, his Spleen is puft up with Wind*; *and* then the conſequence is, *he is likely to grow very Angry and Peeviſh on the ſuddain*; *and deſires the priviledge to ſcold and give it vent.* Now, if the *Spleen* had not taken poſſeſſion of all your Underſtanding, and Senſe, you would never have confeſs'd this to be the natural effect and and product of that Diſeaſe: For, do not we know that you are almoſt devoured with it? That you have no other Excuſe, but that, for the preſent ſullen dulneſs, and ſtupidity of your Converſation? That you have no other Excuſe for writing ſuch a Book as this? That 'tis impoſſible you ſhould write ſuch a one without it? If it were not for the Credit of a *Poet*, to keep you

you a little in countenance, you would find your ſelf perfectly abandoned for your *Spleen*, by all ingenious Society: And yet, it ſeems, you could think your ſelf qualified to charge the *Flatus*, with all its ſcurvey effects upon Mr. *Collier*, out of meer diſdain. Well, I ſee, being related to the Play-houſe will furniſh a man in time, with a ſurmounting aſſurance, that will ſtick at nothing. But, before I part with you about this *Diſeaſe*, let me adviſe you to examine the *Symptoms* of it ſeriouſly with your ſelf, for it is a very equivocal one; many times, when we would ſeem to impute the fault to our *Spleen*, or *Hypochondria*, it really lyes in the Conſcience, and is nothing elſe but an over bearing weight of guilt in the Mind.

The reaſon why I lodge this caution with you, is, becauſe you are not afraid to publiſh very ill *Symptoms* of your caſe to the World: For, would any one but a very looſe and immoral man, have choſen *to amuſe himſelf in a ſlow recovery* P. 32. *from a fit of ſickneſs*, by writing of an obſcene Play? Would any one have

thought upon that occaſionof writing of It, to help to excuſe the obſcenity? And, to ſhew your Repentance for the ſame, ſet up a Horſe laugh at the beginning of a Paragraph, that concern'd your Conſcience ſo nearly? A good Chriſtian, I am ſure, would have choſen to turn his meditations quite another way, on ſuch a juncture. At this rate, what ever you dye a *Martyr* for, it will not be for your *Religion*: But you have diſtinguiſht upon the word, and told us there are *Martyrs* of
P. 48. ſeveral ſorts: Mr. *Collier* you ſay, *is a Martyr to ſcandal*; 'tis well 'tis no worſe, for *Martyrs* you know, are alwayes ſuppoſed to ſuffer unjuſtly: But there is yet another ſort of *Martyr* you mentioned, far beyond that; which in your condition you cannot be too much aware of, and that is, to be a *wicked Martyr, or Martyr for the Devil.*

You ſtrive hard to bring off that expreſ-
P. 51. ſion of yours, That *Nature has been provident only to Bears, and Spiders*; but ſuppoſing I ſhould return your dealing with Mr. *Collier* upon the ſame word, and

and change *Nature* into *God*, the Author of It; then the expreſſion would be, *God has been provident only to Bears and Spiders:* This, you muſt needs think, would not ſound altogether ſo well. P. 31.

What follows in the three next Pages is to publiſh your great reading in *Judicial Aſtrology*; which I ſhall make no exceptions againſt, but advice you to bend your ſtudys that way; you may be more ſerviceable to the publick therein, than by writing ſome ſort of Plays, if it be only by being more Innocent.

You ſo often Triumph at Mr, *Collier's Abſolutions*, that I can't chooſe but take notice of it; you don't conſider what a very mean, and contemptable man you appear your ſelf while you ſtrut and crow thus over anothers misfortunes; it has been alwayes taken for the mark of a baſe, and ungenerous mind: But if that Gentleman has been ſo unfortunate in diſpencing his *Abſolution* once, he will be more wary for the future; and endure a great deal of *pounding*, as you call it, before he will yield to pro- P. 77.

ſtitute his Office ſo far, as to ſquander away an *Abſolution* upon any one belonging to the Stage.

P. 60. You mount in your defence hugely, concerning the Clergy; and having ſmelt at your Adverſaries Arguments, you deſpiſe them; and march along in Triumph for a many Pages and carry it with ſuch a high hand, and lay about you ſo furiouſly; that it is hardly ſafe for a ſtander by to ſtep in, and interrupt you: However, when you have paſt Mr. *Collier* quite through, and clincht him; you will not be angry, if out of meer compaſſion, I cloſe in with you, and hold your arm, to parle a little in his behalf: At the *upper end* of P. 72. *ditto*, one may plainly perceive your ſtorm coming on apace; the *Poet* breaks the poor *Prieſts* line in peices, and paſſes thick upon him: Therefore yet I will ſtand aloof.

Prieſt——*In fine, the Play is a very Religious Poem.*

Poet, Indeed!

loquitur.

Prieſt

Prieſt,——*'Tis upon the matter all Sermon and Anthem.*———

Poet, O Lord!

Prieſt,——*And if it were not deſign'd for the Theater*———

Poet. Out with it man.

Prieſt,——*I have nothing to object*.

So *that's well*, there is one tough bout over, *O' my word I was half afraid* how matters would have gone: But the *Poet* over leaf, owns *this will not doe*; *the advantage does not yet appear*: Therefore ſtand clear again.

Poet, No! Why then.

Prieſt,—*He is rewarded by the King*-

Here's another breathing again; this bout was but very ſhort, and the Poet yet confeſſes, that *the advantage does appear ſtill but coldly*. But ſtand off once more, and beware of the third time———

Poet, Ay? Say you ſo? Why then———

Prieſt

Prieſt,——*In ſhort*———

Poet, Ay? now for the Iliads in a Nutt-ſhell. Ah!---Ah?——Now the *But's* coming indeed, *I had a glimps of him but juſt now.*

Prieſt, *In ſhort he is repreſented lewd but not little.*

Poet——There's an advantage for you now; *In ſhort*, Lewd *but not* little.

And here Mr. *Collier*, poor man is ſuppoſed to fall: I will therefore now ſtep in and examine whether his wound be mortal, or no; for it ſeems 'twas a home thruſt.———Hah? Why is this all the execution? Here's one of *Hudibras's* notable Combats, a huge clattering, and coyle, but nothing done.—*Lewd*, but not *little*: If that be all, I'll fetch but two Small Stitches, and it ſhall be as ſound a Limb, as any Mr. *Congreve* has about him. Let me ſee—*Lewd*, as to his Perſon; but not *little*, as to his Office. There, now 'tis done. This is plainly Mr. *Collier's* meaning

meaning, and all he contends for, in ſo many Pages before, where he is ſo ſtrangely put to the banter.

Well, but ſay you, *then, I confeſs, I have been in an errour* : Why is that ſuch a wonder? But ſtill I ſee you will miſtake your ſelf; for this once you are in the right: You ſay, *I thought a man never appeared ſo little, as when he appear'd extreamly Lewd*, 'tis true; but then, keep the man, and his function aſſunder; and, as Mr. *Collier* explained himſelf in the ſame breath (where you ſo diſingeniouſly, and Barbarouſly interrupted him to ſhew your little wit:) *The diſ. falls rather upon the perſon than the office.* P. 71

For, as he explains himſelf in ano- place, p. 139. the *Man* may be *little*; but the *Prieſts* are not ſo. Contrary whereunto, he has ſufficiently ſhewn, *Chap.* 4. you contrive your *Lewd* men and *Rakes*, to make the moſt conſider- able Figures in your Comedy: Which ſhews, how little uſe you make of a good *Thought*, in your way of *Practice*

Where-

Whereas you give your audience no other opportunity of judging of the dignity of a *Prieſt*'s office, but by letting them ſee a man in holy Orders, always in the very meaneſt Character; and Condition; ſneaking, and contemptable, to the loweſt degree of Comedy, and reducing *Rogers* Reverence, underneath the favours of a *Nurſe*.

But let me get out of all this ſtuff once, and come with you to the merits of the cauſe; which if I intend to do
P 86. I muſt meet you at your Concluſion of this Head, p. 86. *I will only ſay, that no man living has a greater reſpect for a good Clergy Man, than my ſelf*; Let all that are good of the Order, riſe up and thank you for it! But what method do you take to manifeſt your reſpect to them? Why truly, by never bringing a Clergy-man on the Stage, but in a ridiculous manner: and conſequently, you never take an occaſion to put your audience in mind of one of that order; but to expoſe him to contempt: all your *Parſons* are brought in upon baſe, and ſordid errands; which nothing can

juſtifie

juſtifie in you, but the ſuppoſition, that all of them are really of that Stamp and Character; which truely is very hard: In the mean time, you never take any care to diſtinguiſh the ill man from his office, by any reſerve of Reverence to it; nor drop any thing that ſhall give your Audience the leaſt occaſion to remember, that the Order, and good Profeſſors of it are abſolutely unconcerned in the *Buffoon's* part upon the Stage.

You ſay, you are *very indifferent, whether ever the Gown appear upon the Stage, or not:* would you had put a full period there! *but,* ſay you, *if it does, it ſhould not be worn by the Character of a good Man:* That's a ſtrange relaps of kindneſs to them indeed. Why? would it look like ſuch an unnatural repreſentation, to ſhew that *Gown* on a *Good Mans* back? I muſt be very ſhort with you upon this point; all the whole World, without the Play-houſe doors, who have any regard for Religion, are againſt you in this

matter : and that upon very good reaſon, founded upon experience, that will not endure to be contradicted: for the People are apt enough to be miſlead into an ill opinion of the Clergy of themſelves ; and therefore, when you always ſhew the *Parſon* in a ridiculous manner, they will be apt to take the hint, and without diſtinction, think a *Parſon* ridiculous : and while they are tempted to have the Clergy in deriſion, the next ſhort ſtep that immediately follows, will be to have Religion ſo too.

A *Poet* had need call himſelf an *Ally* to the Clergy at this rate: You ſhew your ſelf in another form in the foregoing Paragraph; there you appear without diſguiſe, as inveterate an Enemy to that Order, for the compaſs of one Section, as ever I met with in my Life. You there take an occaſion from Mr. *Colliers* Book, to ſeduce the whole *Laity* againſt the *Clergy*, and hoot them about their ears. *I am not the only one*, ſay you

you, *who look upon this Pamphlet of his, to be a gun level'd at the whole Laity, while the ſhot only glances on the Theatre* : I am ſorry it only *glances* there, I believe all the force of it was intended to be ſpent intirely on it: And I believe, out of the *Theatre*, Mr. *Congreve* is the only man who would have the *gun* to be *level'd at the whole Laity*. He can have but one Argument on his ſide, to give him countenance, and that he prepared for himſelf, againſt he ſhould be in diſtreſs: In the 16. P. of his Book. It runs, in ſhort, to this effect; The *Stage* repreſents the *whole World*, this *great gun* was *level'd* directly *againſt the Stage*, ſo, againſt the whole World: And, by conſequence it did but juſt *glance* upon the Stage, but fell in with the whole *Laity* and made mad work with them. But now, if you will give me leave, I will remind you of one plain reaſon grounded upon matter of fact that the whole *Laity* did not take this

gun to be *level'd directly againſt them*; for, if you remember, aſſoon as ever it was diſcharged againſt the *Theatre*, they took it for a ſignal to fall upon you, and accordingly, the next *Quarter Seſſions, the Grand Jury of Middleſex* (as I hinted before) who are all *Lay-men*, preſented Mr. *Congreve* and ſome others, for their obſcene Plays. I ſhall not take notice of the further reſpect you ſhew the Clergy there, where you open a whole Field of War againſt them, for their *Controverſial Divinity*.

For my part, I declare, I am a Friend to Religion, and no Enemy to good Poetry; if you take care to maintain your *alliance* to the Clergy, by having a due regard to their Character, and Cauſe. I ſhall think the Stage no unjuſtifiable diverſion, and amuſement, to People. A celebrated Female in uſe, has lately convinc'd you, in her *fatal Friendſhip*, that 'tis poſſible

Mrs. Trotter.

poſſible to entertain, with all the Judgment, Wit, and Beauty of Poetry; without *ſhocking our ſenſes*, with intollerable prophaneſs or obſcenity.

There is nothing, I know, which you affect more, than to paſs for a fine, and exact Writer, even to a Mathematical nicety! but I muſt ſpeak freely, I never could yet meet with a Dramatick Poet that could write good Proſe. Your Eſſays that way do commonly dwindle, and run off into Dialogiſm, Ramble, and Banter; thus, at every ſhort turn of your pen, *Indeed! O Lord! Ay? your Servant, &c.* Even Mr. *Congreve* himſelf is as far from being a Correct, and ſteady Oratour, as *Tully* was from being a good Poet: To convince you of this, I ſhall not ſtand with you for a deal of abſurd trifling, and awkard ſtuff, that puts the Reader out of countenance, and ſickens his taſte, and apprehenſion, almoſt in every Page of your little Book:

But

But before I take my leave of you for the preſent, I ſhall juſt point out to your Eye, a few of thoſe obvious and blazing inconſiſtencies (I had well nigh ſaid Contradictions) which you have ſo plentifully dropt in, among your Amendments of Mr. *Collier's* faults, *ex. gr.*

P. 77. You charge him ſeverely for *frequenting* the Play-houſe: *Why does he abandon*, &c. *And come capering, and friſking between the Scenes?* And yet, P. 109, you inſinuate him to be a Man of *Conſpiracy*, and *Sedition*; and at the ſame time impute the cauſe of it, to the non-frequenting of *Theatres*, and *Muſick*.—— But this, you will ſay, was a great many Pages aſunder.——Well,

But, P. 104, you firſt charge Mr. *Collier* for his *ſhare in the Vanity of triumphing in the worſt Argument*; and yet in the very ſame line you ſay, *I think truly he had a fair appearance of right on his ſide.*——

This

This fell out very unhappily indeed.

P. 99. you ſay, *you wonder he is not aſhamed to own that he is ſo well acquainted with the* ἐκκλησιαζούσαι *of Ariſtophanes*; and yet but ſix lines after you confeſs, as if he *meant to veil* that Play under a *Miſnomer*: And again, that by his *Artifice* he *deſign'd* not to *be diſcovered*. By the way, if it were ſuch an abominable ſhame to own the reading of that Play, How came the baſhful, and ſhame-fac'd Mr. *Congreve* to publiſh in the ſame breath, how very intimately he has been acquainted with it himſelf? So far it ſeems, as to Epitomize all the Obſcenity of it, and to compute with *little Bays*, how many times *he names the thing directly*: by your remarks it comes to a *hundred* and odd, and your word truly is to be taken in ſuch a caſe; for I believe you would not willingly have overlook'd any Idea tending that way, for want of application:

plication: And in ſo doing, by your own argument, you have well imploy'd your time, and your imagination: Nothing can bring you off handſomly from this pinch; but putting on a bold face, and owning, that it is peculiarly your buſineſs to read baudy, as well as write it. There is no neceſſity I muſt confeſs, that a *Poet* ſhould be aſhamed of every thing which other men ought to be aſham'd off. But to go on,

P. 93. You declare, *you have avoided all recriminations:* And yet, your whole Book is little elſe, but an attempt at recrimination upon Mr. *Collier* throughout.

Once more, In the ſame Paragraph you ſay, *you have not ſo much as made one Citation from any of your Plays in favour of them*; and yet, P. 22. and 23, you tranſcribe all the Moral of the *Double dealer*, *i.e.* all that is tollerable of the whole Play, to bring it off, if

if you can, from being guilty of *running riot upon Smut and Pedantry*. And again P. 36. you particularly point out the chief of thoſe parts of the *Mourning Bride*, which are worthy to be obſerved, in order to have them attone for *one or two erroneous expreſſions* in it. I have not leiſure to compare you any farther with your ſelf, but theſe few inſtances of varience between you, are ſufficient to convince you, that the next time you write in an angry Controverſie, you ſhould make uſe of more ſincerity, or at leaſt a better memory.

After all, I don't find that Mr. *Collier*, or any body elſe, but one poor *Old Woman* could ever bring you to confeſs, and reform an errour, or do any good upon you: She, (God knows who or whence!) one out of the Clouds 'tis like, for you have loſt her direction, and cannot remember) ſhe, once it ſeems, convinc't you of a fault, which you candidly acknowledge,

P. 42. and there promiſe to *ſtrike it out in the next impreſſion*: when the *Double Dealer* has another Edition, I believe you may be as good as your word: by that time perhaps you may think of mending ſome other faults of yours, that more nearly concern your Perſon. You will take this freedom, I hope, in good part, from one who is with all due reſpects, *&c.*

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